Biologic Reveille

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Abstract

Be thou my strength and shield; be Thou still my strength and shield...
Then he felt arms around him, rocking him gently. He was in a brightly lit room and his mother's face smiled at him. He started to speak but she put a cool finger to his lips and pointed toward a bright blob of light. It hurt his eyes at first but then he saw the tired man who sat there on the throne. He was looking at Bingo and smiling. He said something that Bingo couldn't understand, but he felt his body relaxing and happiness flooded him.

"Bingo! Bingo!" Bingo opened his eyes and saw his father's face bending over him. His father's eyes were tender, almost like the man's on the throne, and he held Bingo tightly against his strong chest.

His father was saying things that Bingo couldn't understand at first, then he knew his father was telling him about God, just like Miss Fuller had. Bingo closed his eyes and saw the throne again, but this time his father was sitting beside the throne and the Man smiled again and placed His hand on his father's head.

—Patrick Minear, Sci. Sr.

**Biologic Reveille**

BE THOU my strength and shield; be Thou still my strength and shield . . . hummmmm, hum, hummmmm . . ." The wail from the girl standing at the bus stop was swept up by the wind and compressed with one swirl. Her bony frame vibrated uncontrollably as each gust of wind tried to blow through her.

"I am weeeak," chattering teeth, "but Thou art mightyyyyy . . ." She sang more softly now but clutched her New Testament more firmly. Two eight o'clock stragglers sauntered up to the stop as the bus groaned around the corner and halted. Naomi's frizzly, unkempt hair whirled goodbye to the wind as she ran into the shelter of the bus.

She dropped her coin into the box, marched to the vacant double seat, her vacant double seat, and arranged her coat carefully just as she always arranged her coat on the bus every morning at eight o'clock on the way to work. She ignored the robust gang of students on their way to college as she yanked out her Testament and stuck her scrubbed face close to its pages as though the closer she got the easier it was to transplant herself to Palestine.
Her skin was a putty grey that just matched her coat, and though her mouth was large, no one ever noticed because it wasn’t red or even pink; it was just a darker grey. But her eyes compensated for her nondescript appearance. They were piercing and snapping and when she looked at you she really didn’t need to ask, “Are you saved?” because her eyes did it for her.

Susan Bell, the steno at the administration building, shot a look across the aisle and nudged the young home economics student beside her. The two smiled and nodded at each other. Naomi skipped the pages about Ezekiel’s harp and flipped the pages so that she could see the emergency door, and not Susan Bell, out of the corner of her eye. She’d go back and read Ezekiel later.

The bus stopped at Center and Thirteenth, and after the usual load got on, every seat was filled. That is, every seat except the one by Naomi, but that was part of the routine too. As the bus lurched forward, a tall man carrying a T square and books ran across the street. The driver stopped and let him on. Naomi looked up with everyone else. The fact that the student wasn’t a regular eight o’clock passenger aroused comment, but his black wavy hair and the features which hadn’t just fallen into place provided even more interest.

But Naomi looked down quickly at her Bible. She’d hate to have Susan and the rest see her look at him. Then she stiffened. One seat left! She looked intently at verse nineteen but with unseeing eyes.

The tall rugged veteran was proceeding down the aisle, nodding at one or two buddies as he went. And suddenly he was beside her. He plopped into two-thirds of the seat, and his shoulders wedged her tight against the door. As he rubbed his large hands, his heavy flight jacket concealed a slight shiver. Naomi held her breath as he turned, smiled warmly and said, “Lovely weather, isn’t it?”

The corners of Naomi’s mouth twitched and she mumbled, “Yes,” and then quickly added with a trial giggle, for Naomi had never giggled before, much less in a situation like this, “I mean, no, it’s too windy!”

He smiled again and then looked ahead. Naomi reached down and flipped the corner of her coat over the small open Bible.

—Phyllis Thompson, A.A. Jr.